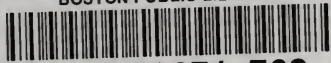


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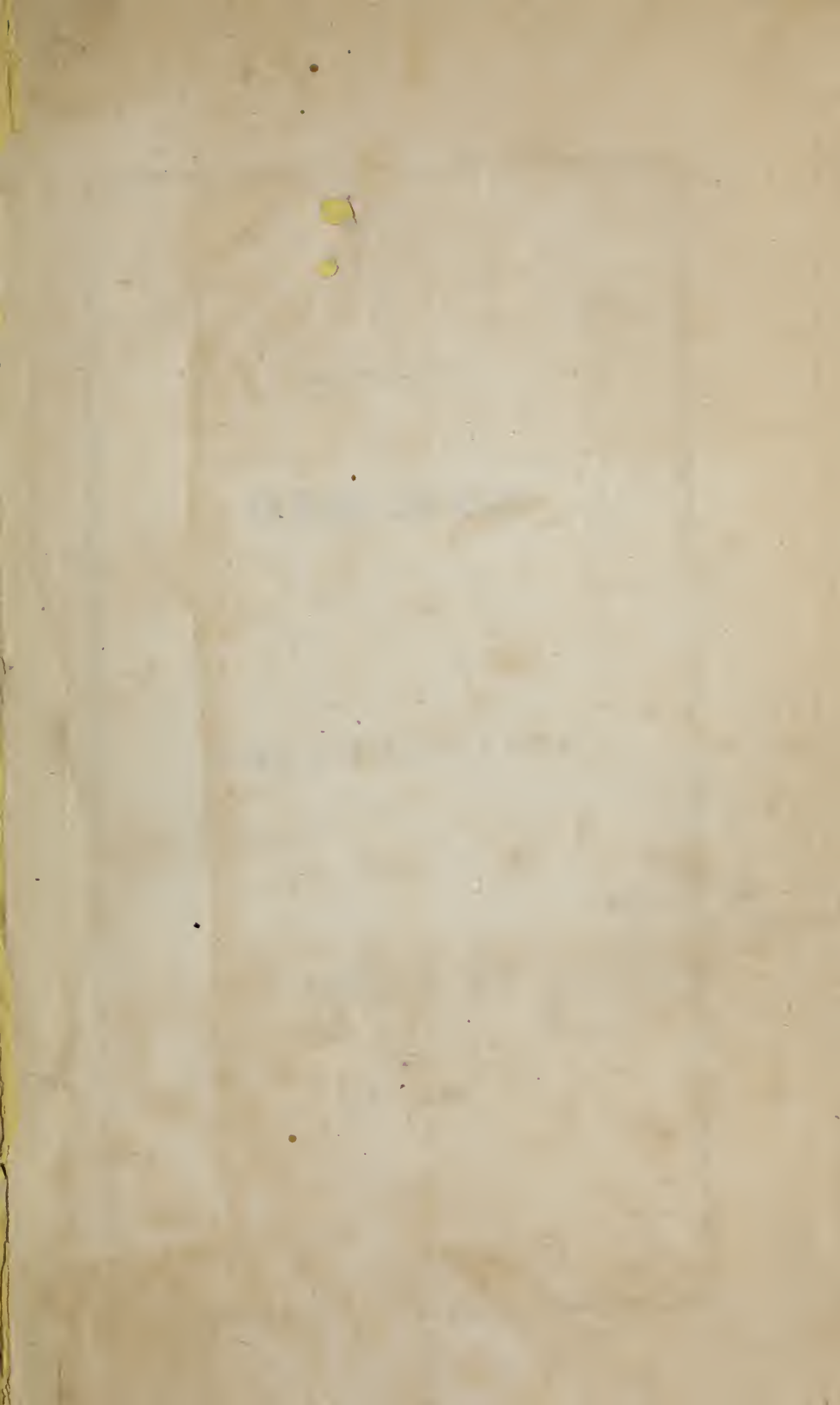
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SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE

ORDINATION OF MR. HORATIO STEBBINS,

OVER THE

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY,

IN

FITCHBURG, MASS.,

NOVEMBER 5, 1851.

BY ANDREW P. PEABODY,

Pastor of the South Church, in Portsmouth, N. H.

TOGETHER WITH THE

CHARGE, RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP,

AND

ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE SOCIETY.

FITCHBURG:

PRINTED BY E. & J. GARFIELD.

1851.



8

FORGIVENESS.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE

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IN

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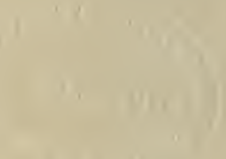
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1851.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

PHYSICS 311



PHYSICS 311
LECTURE NOTES
BY
[Faint text]

S E R M O N .

Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of Sins.—Acts xiii. 38.

AMONG Christian doctrines, none takes precedence of forgiveness of sin, in the New Testament. None is so entirely lost sight of in the creeds of Christendom, which seem as if they were purposely constructed so as to exclude the idea or possibility of the divine pardon. Thus the Romanist applies the name of forgiveness to that which is earned by good works; but pardon cannot be earned. Various sections of the Reformed Church regard forgiveness as something purchased by the payment of an equivalent for man's deficiencies in Christ's obedience, or for man's due punishment in Christ's sufferings; but a purchased immunity is not forgiveness,—pardon and price are incommensurable terms. Among liberal Christians, there are many, who seem to take Combe's Constitution of Man for their Gospel. They maintain, that every action must draw after it its full result and entire retribution; that the law of cause and effect remains undisturbed in the spiritual as in the outward world; that a man must

reap as he sows, and all that he sows; and that penitence is availing, only as it constitutes a new moral cause, which must in time produce its proportionate effect, and introduces a new order of permanent moral causes of its own kindred, which must have a permanent and increasing influence.

Now these views are all defective rather than false. The Romanist is right in regarding good works as the condition of salvation, though wrong in supposing that they can earn forgiveness for one's self or others. The Calvinist is right in deeming Christ's obedience and suffering a prolific source of spiritual benefit to man, though unsupported, as I think, by the tenor of Scripture, or by a single passage as interpreted by its context, in assuming the mercantile idea of a price paid and a pardon bought. The Unitarian is right in applying the law of cause and effect to the spiritual world, though wrong in supposing that all moral causes are equally capable of being traced and analyzed by a finite mind, and in ignoring the divine forgiveness as the most potent and influential of those causes. Combe's *Constitution of Man* is a good book, so far as it goes, and would not be an unchristian book, if it did not profess to tell the whole truth. But it stops where the Gospel begins. It expounds the divine law; but is silent as to the divine redemption. It unfolds the theory of righteous retribution; but suppresses the still more essential theory of pardon.

I have chosen the divine forgiveness as my subject for this occasion, because it ought to be second in prominence to no other pulpit theme, and because a Christian ministry will be effectual in proportion to the distinctness with which it is maintained, and the faith and fervor with which it is urged.

Forgiveness, as I have intimated, is seldom held and represented as a distinct article of Christian belief, but is confounded, sometimes with remission of punishment, sometimes with the natural tendency of virtuous effort, sometimes with the conferment of heavenly happiness. In fine, it is identified with the consequences of actions, rather than with the relations of the moral agent. But in its scriptural acceptance, it defines simply the existing relation between God and the human soul. Punishment might be remitted, yet the soul remain unforgiven. Retribution might have its full sweep, yet the soul be forgiven.

I may perhaps best illustrate the doctrine under discussion by an analogy drawn from a human family. Suppose a father, who is all that a father ought to be. He is incapable of anger; and never for a moment wills the pain or injury of his children, but always their highest good. He has no passions to gratify by punishment. But he loves goodness above all things else; and his own purity of heart makes him painfully sensitive to the presence, continuance and increase of evil. The promotion of goodness is therefore the prevailing aim of

his parental administration. He has a stubborn, wayward, vicious son. The mutual relations of the father and son are essentially modified by the son's character. Though the father pities the son, he has no sympathy with him. He regards him, though with tenderness, with untempered disapproval, nay, with righteous indignation. He is conscious of a wide gulf between him and his child. And the son has a corresponding consciousness. He takes no enjoyment in his father's society. He feels alienated from him, — when absent, forgets him, — when with him, occupies the attitude of indifference or defiance. In fine, the natural kindred is more than balanced by a mutual antipathy of spirit, from which neither party can recede, unless the father ceases to be good, or the son makes himself vile no longer.

The son, we will suppose, repents, changes his disposition and purposes, determines to lead an obedient and virtuous life. From the moment when that change begins, while reformation is in its incipient stage, while bad habits still cling, though with a dying grasp, and the iniquity of his heels still compasses him about, the father's relation to him is reversed. There is now approval, sympathy, confidential intercourse, spiritual kindred, the free inflow of the father's spirit into the child's. And this altered relation is forgiveness. It matters not what course the father's superior wisdom prompts him to take for the child's good. He may think it best to

admit the penitent son at once to all the outward immunities and privileges that he had forfeited, and to leave nothing on his part that can serve as a memento of the son's former mode of life. Or, on the other hand, he may deem it essential to the son's rapid reformation and permanent good, that in some form or way, and for a limited time, he should feel the consequences of his waywardness ; and, if so, his permitting these consequences to take effect, so far from being inconsistent with forgiveness, is part and parcel of forgiveness, which otherwise would be less genuine and entire.

But what effect has this alteration on the son's future course ? His reformation is immeasurably more rapid and thorough, than it would be, had he the same good purposes, and no father, or a less virtuous father, or a father who was still angry with him, or a father who had felt the same towards him in his waywardness that he does now. The restoration of his father's confidence, sympathy and approval is a powerful motive to goodness,—an accelerating moral force,—an invaluable means of self-discipline and progress. It blends with his every moral effort,—is an ever-present rebuke to the bad passions which he had indulged, and a constant incentive to duty and progress.

We will now apply this analogy to our relation with God. Take the case of an impenitent sinner ; it matters not whether of one whom the world brands with that name, or of one, who, faithful in his human rela-

tions, leads as to the spirit a fatherless life,— is non-religious or irreligious. God loves him, pities him, seeks his good, is not angry with him, as men count anger. But he regards him with unmitigated disapproval and displeasure. He beholds in him no marks of his own spiritual lineage and kindred. He looks upon him as a self-exiled rebel, as a self-bereaved orphan, as a self-doomed outcast from the mansion in the Father's house made ready for him. And what a horrible position is this for a human being to occupy! To know that the benignant eye of the Omniscient is ever upon him, that it marks his course and rests upon his soul without a glance of consent or approval, that it recognizes him only as an alienated being, in wrong relations, under the sway of wrong motives, pursuing wrong ends,— to feel that he must be forever under that inspection, nearer to God than to any finite being or object, yet morally separated from him by a barrier as wide as the universe,— oh, can there be a deeper hell than this? Can the prayer, "Father, forgive," involve the remission of a more fearful doom? No mortal can feel this consciousness to the full, and remain as he is. Most of those, who ought to cherish it, drown in worldly care or pleasure all sense of the divine presence, shut out the very thought of God, if not from the intellectual, at least from the emotional nature, and seek refuge in that worst form of infidelity, in which the heart says to the head, (and I believe that the head never says so to

the heart,) "There is no God." Others brace themselves up to the attitude of fierce defiance and open rebellion, like the embattled hosts of fallen angels, "who durst defy the Omnipotent to arms." But the deliberate consciousness of this alienated position is the first step towards a change. It is the only true conviction of sin,—the only germ of a repentance not to be repented of. A perception of the consequences of sin, even a profound sense of its retribution in eternity, is of little avail. Multitudes of the most depraved are more fully aware of all this than their religious monitors. But let one be brought clearly and prolongedly to regard himself as under the unqualified displeasure of the ever-present God,—let him say in his heart, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight,"—he must repent.

This repentance is a change of mind, a change of purpose, a change of moral direction. The penitent hates what he loved before, and loves the objects of his former hatred or indifference. His aims are now right, his moral efforts rightly directed, his will in accordance with the divine will. And God now regards him with approval, with complacency, (if we may borrow a term more strictly applicable to man,) with sympathy. This new relation on God's part, this aspect of the divine countenance never turned to him before, is forgiveness. Before, though unpunished, he was unforgiven. Now, punished or not, he is forgiven. The fact that he is

forgiven determines nothing with regard to the consequences of his past sin, or rather determines simply this, — that retribution will extend so far as his spiritual good demands, and no farther. If it be best for him, that the malign causes previously at work be frustrated of the residue of their consequences, they will instantly cease, and he will be hence-forward in his own experience, as he already is in the divine regard, as though he had never offended. If it be best for him that these malign causes shall have their full effect, reaching even beyond the present life, his must be an alloyed and clouded happiness till they have spent their force; yet he will be none the less forgiven. If it be best for him that these malign causes should operate but partially and should altogether cease at death, he will bear the life-long scars of the old wound-marks; yet will be as much forgiven while they last as when they disappear.

But the most momentous of all things for the penitent is that he have a clear consciousness of pardon, — of the divine approval and complacency. This assurance will make him happy, immeasurably beyond the power of all things else to mar his peace. If the Father's arms are only open for the returned prodigal, he can cheerfully take his place among the hired servants. Nay, if he must for a season crouch among the swine, and feed upon their husks, it is enough for him that he is a child, pardoned, accepted, beloved, and the very husks will seem to him as angel's food.

But most of all, the consciousness of pardon is precious as a motive force. The sentence, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," can alone give power to the mandate, "Go and sin no more." He, whose resolutions are good, but who moves on with the consciousness of the divine displeasure, must move haltingly, and under painful discouragement. There can be no alacrity in his obedience, no vigor in his progress, no energy to wrestle down the evil that he hates, or to do the good that he loves. He is a cripple and a laggard on the race-ground. He lies, like the impotent man at Bethesda, waiting for the moving of the waters. But the consciousness of the divine approval is the prime fact in the penitent's moral being. It inspires him with fresh and growing courage and energy. It quells temptation, and conquers sin. It enters as the most potent of all moral causes into his inward life. Let other causes still work, its force is culminating, while theirs is expiring. Its effects outnumber, outweigh, transcend, supplant theirs. They become what the foul exhalations of the night are, when flooded and overborne by the sunlight and the morning breeze. The soul, thus assured of pardon, feels its weakness reinforced by Omnipotence. "I am not alone, but the Father is with me," is thenceforward the epitome of its life-experience.

Thus is forgiveness less an end, than a means. It holds the first, not the last place in the development of the spiritual life. It is not a gift reserved for heaven,

but the earliest ripe of "celestial fruits on earthly ground." With this, the soul can cast aside all fear as to the future, nay, can dismiss all painful questionings as to the length of the shadow which early guilt may cast; for, to the pardoned soul, there can be no needless penalty. If the past have its consequences in the future, they can be suffered only so long as they are needed to sustain humility, watchfulness and diligence.

Such, then, is the Christian doctrine of forgiveness. As I said at the outset, it is in all creeds kept too much in the background. People have always preferred to discuss the outside facts, the mere machinery of the spiritual life. The nature and extent of retribution have always taken the place in the regard of the Christian Church, which the simple idea of pardon ought to hold. But the most important question for us all, at any and every moment, is,—How stand I beneath the divine eye? How does God regard me? Have I his approval, his favor? The very word RELIGION points to this as the fundamental question. It denotes *relation*, and, in its current use, *our relation to God*. We all of us live alike, with hardly an exception, too much in the outward world. This externality of living is the fountain-head of all sin. It is this, too, that leads Christians, to so great a degree, to locate spiritual ideas in the future, and to discuss their own and one another's fitness for heaven, rather than their present relation to God. But, could the veil be for one moment with-

drawn,—could the divine presence seem as near as it will, when our disembodied spirits shall look upon the open countenance of Him that sitteth upon the throne,—we should see that we stand before Him now in the same position, in which we expect to stand at some far-off day of judgment. We should not even think of the future, but only of the all-momentous present, which involves infinite possibilities of future joy or woe. The divine displeasure alone would seem the lowest hell; the divine approval alone would make it heaven all around us, and all before us. Are we unforgiven? Are we pardoned? Does that omnipresent eye condemn or sanction, disown or approve? Are our desires, aims, tendencies, such that we must confess, “The withering frown of God rests upon my path?” Or, are they such that we can say, “Father, I know that I am striving and tending whither thy love invites and accompanies me?”

As I have intimated, forgiveness may admit or exclude any consequences of past sin, though it implies absolute safety, the precise discipline that we need, and growing, and ultimately, perfect happiness. The safety is ours from the moment that we are conscious of forgiveness; and to that consciousness we are entitled, if our desires and aims are Godward and heavenward. The discipline that we need, the degree of happiness in reserve for us, is the subject, in part, of experience, in part, of express revelation. That, when sinful

habits have been deeply rooted, and of long continuance, their consequences outlast repentance and forgiveness, is a fact of undoubted experience. Yet I believe that in this regard experience falls very far short of the mechanical theories of those, who parade the law of cause and effect as the supreme law of the spiritual universe. In the present life, the consequences of repented sin vanish more rapidly, and more entirely, than could be calculated by any system of theological arithmetic; for, while we can estimate the disastrous effects of sin, the peace of God which rests upon the pardoned soul passes all understanding, transcends in its fullness, and its fruits, all human measurement, and may flood with heaven's own purity and blessedness the spirit, which, in theory, ought still to be immersed in the cloud, and reeling under the burden, of old iniquity.

There remain certain questions with regard to the future life, closely connected with, though not necessarily involved in, the doctrine of forgiveness. How can we retain our identity in a future state, and yet not suffer there even from repented sin? Suppose that we cannot say how. It is the province of revelation, not to solve problems, but to disclose facts. The laws of being, in both and all worlds, involve much which the finite, or at least the earth-bound soul, cannot comprehend. But as to the facts in this case, revelation is clear. The promise of perfect happiness in heaven for

the pardoned penitent is unqualified and full. Nothing can be more unscriptural than the theory, which would make heaven like the present life, the scene of conflict, and possibly, of painful discipline, or would infuse a single drop of bitterness into the cup of eternal joy. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." Do we know not how? Perhaps not. But do we know how the dead are raised, and in what bodies they come? Eternal, spiritual life is in itself a mystery, familiar to our contemplation, and regarded as intrinsically credible, only because in this one Christian idea our souls have been bathed from infancy. But this stupendous fact of immortality, however sustained by collateral analogies, has revelation for its only basis. We believe it, because he who came from the bosom of the Father declared it, exhibited it at the gate of Nain and among the sepulchres of Bethany, and bore about its evidence in his own resurrection-body. On the same authority, we receive the assurance of perfect happiness in heaven for the penitent.

Yet the heaven which Christ has revealed attaches reward and prerogative to early, devoted and rapidly growing piety, over late repentance and imperfect sanctification. In the kingdom of the redeemed, there are the least and the greatest,—those who are saved as

through fire, and those who wear almost visibly the amaranthine crown before their ascension-robcs are ready. And we can easily conceive how this may be, and yet all be happy. The remaining sins of the penitent may, in heaven, be imperfections, not sins. There may be virtues, of which they carry hence only the budding germ, to be brought into bloom and fruitfulness, in the heavenly garden. Because they enter the higher life thus imperfect, they must move onward with a tardier gait, and soar with a feebler flight. They must sustain an appreciable loss, in comparison with the more faithful. Yet, in the absence of scorn and envy, in the perfect harmony and love that pervade the celestial republic, these distinctions may be acquiesced in without pain, and those on the lowest plane may feel unutterable joy in the distant contemplation of heights of attainment within their future scope, though they are heights which they might already have reached, and passed, had their earthly life been marked by earlier and more active piety.

It is evident, on the most cursory thought, that men must enter heaven with widely different capacities for happiness. There dies to-day, we will suppose, a sincere penitent of four-score, who, within the year now waning, has in deep contrition consecrated to God powers perverted and affections debased by a long life of sin, has loved God and goodness with all the heart that was left in him, and has pursued the way of duty with

what shattered strength of body and mind remained to him. Side by side with him, there passes to the gates of heaven one whose youth and age have been alike holy; and when he dies, all the ways of Zion mourn, and the ark of the covenant droops, because his hand is no longer beneath it. Now, in order for these two persons to enjoy the same kind and degree of happiness, the nature of the one must be arbitrarily changed, while the other merely takes the place for which he is already fitted, so that the former would receive a positive reward for his protracted impenitence. The one has less than an unperturbed child's capacity for spiritual happiness; the other is ready to sweep an angel's harp, and to fill an angel's sphere. Each may receive the kind and amount of happiness of which he is capable, and both may be perfectly happy; while yet, could their respective conditions be laid open to mortal view, the contrast between them might appear vast enough to arouse to energetic effort all that are at ease in Zion, to make the procrastinating halt no longer, and to wield an immense influence in behalf of early piety, the most scrupulous watchfulness, and the most conscientious diligence in every walk of duty.

But now recurs the question,—If memory remain entire, how can we fail to suffer in heaven from the remembrance of early sin?

In the first place, our retaining no trace of sin in our characters may render its remembrance no longer a

source of sorrow. What makes us feel it the most painfully in this world, is the difficulty of so entirely subduing it, that it shall not creep in upon us unawares,—attack us when off our guard,—when vanquished, and, as we think, slain seven times over, rise in its crippled strength, and if it cannot bruise the head, wound the heel. Now, as character is the substratum of consciousness, the entire eradication of sin from the character may render our self-consciousness widely different from what it is, while the least fibre of sinful desire or habit remains to be plucked up, or the feeblest shoots put forth, and demand to be broken off with incessant watchfulness and care.

Then, again, in this life we are thrown more upon the resources of memory, than we can be in the life to come. As to our earthly condition, repeated miscalculations and disappointments damp all the ardor of hope before we get midway in our career. Our position becomes fixed. Essential change for the better grows improbable; and if a lengthened future is before us, it has many certainties of bereavement and suffering too painful for us to look upon. In fine, decrease and decline are the necessary law of human life after it has passed its meridian. Thus, as we float down the current, back-water is perpetually setting in upon our vessel. And not only from the forecast shadows of coming events, but from the present, also, we must often turn away in doubt, apprehension or grief. At such times,

if we have an inheritance in heaven, we look into the celestial future ; but our regards can rest on nothing future this side of heaven. As to earthly things, the inevitable tendency is to look back to the fuller, brighter, happier, (we are prone to deem them, though as to the essentials of true felicity, they ought not to be the happier,) days of our early life ; and, if sin has left its shadow there, the mind cannot help resting painfully upon it. Then, too, how many outward associations are there of place and circumstance, to remind us, so long as we live here, of sin that we may have forsaken and outgrown ! But this cannot be in heaven. There we shall find ourselves surrounded by associations which suggest no remembrance of evil,—by scenes on which no shadow of guilt has ever rested. There, too, no clouded future can throw the thoughts back upon bygone experiences,—no disappointments lowering before us, can draw from us the cry, “Oh, that I were as in months past !” With a present inexhaustible in its resources for improvement and happiness, with a future opening before us, faster than we can avail ourselves of its opportunities, gird ourselves for its duties, and anticipate its joys, this backward cast of the mental vision can no longer be habitual, but there must rather be a forgetting of those things which are behind, as we reach forth unto those things which are before.

I have thus presented what seems to me the sound and scriptural view of forgiveness, its nature, its conse-

quences in the life that now is, and in that which is to come. I have chosen this subject the more readily, because I apprehend that there is a growing tendency to ignore religion, that is, the science of spiritual relations, in preaching. In some quarters, I hear the complaint,—“We have faithful exhortations, clear exhibitions of moral duty, pungent appeals to the conscience in behalf of the obligation of self-discipline, self-culture, benevolence and philanthropy; but we hear very little about another world, a realm of spiritual being, retribution, pardon, eternity.” Now this preaching about earthly things, however sound, is of little or no avail. It presents, indeed, the mechanism of the religious life in perfect order, but without its motive power. The wheels are all in place and gearing; but the fire has gone out in the furnace.

There never was an age when there was so much ostensibly faithful preaching, as now. Yet practical Christianity seems on the decline. Worldly interests are made supreme, and engrossing, to a degree unknown before. Social evils, that were checked for a season, are flowing back upon us in full tide. Iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold. All this is chargeable, in great measure, to the fact, that in the preaching of our times there is more law than gospel, more fear than love, more Judaism than Christianity. Law, of itself, is pitifully weak. Its clearest, most faithful exhibitions are like the *Aurora Borealis*, which may make

night hardly less brilliant than day, but cannot shed a single warm ray upon the frosty autumnal air.

“When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; therefore loveth she much.” “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.” Such was the preaching by which Jesus sought to draw all men unto him. Let the Christian pulpit be reconsecrated to the ministry of reconciliation,—to the preaching of repentance and forgiveness. May he, whom we this day ordain as a Christian shepherd, make it his first and constant aim, to hold forth the divine mercy for the remission of sins, and thus, in Christ’s stead, may he beseech men to be reconciled to God. Then shall the record of his ministry be transcribed in full into God’s book of remembrance,—the Lamb’s book of life.

CHARGE.

BY REV. GEO. R. NOYES, D. D.

It is not to be presumed, my dear sir, that you have entered upon the office of a christian minister, without having made yourself acquainted with the common duties which belong to it, and the qualifications of head and heart, which are necessary for the discharge of them. I have no doubt, that at this time you feel, with peculiar depth and tenderness, the obligations which rest upon you. I shall not, therefore, in the few minutes which I have a right to consume, aim to enumerate all your duties as a preacher and pastor, while, as the organ of this council, I give you the customary charge to ministerial faithfulness. I will only offer for your consideration a few suggestions, out of many of equal or greater importance, relating to your office as a preacher.

The great object, my brother, to which you have devoted yourself, is the regeneration, the spiritual improvement, the present and future salvation of the people committed to your charge. For this purpose you

have been ordained a minister or servant of Jesus Christ. I charge you to keep in mind this your relation to Jesus Christ, and to remember that the means you must use, the course you must pursue, and the assistance you must seek in the attainment of the great end of your ministry, have been prescribed to you by Jesus Christ. You are not placed here to contrive new and ingenious plans of your own for bringing men into the kingdom of God. Your great business is that of wielding the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God contained in the Scriptures. You are ordained to preach Christ and him crucified. You have not been introduced into this sacred desk to be a wrangler for one particular notion, to be an advocate of any human creed, to be an organ of any particular party. You came here to preach the religion of Christ, as you understand it, and believe that he taught it, in its height and its depth, its length and its breadth. I charge you to suffer no spirit of opposition, or of controversy, or of party, to magnify in your mind the points in which you differ from other Christians, beyond their real importance as parts of the Christian system. Preach to your people the gospel, the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel. Let it never be said with truth, that you preach a negative system, a lax system, or a cold system, unless the whole gospel of Christ relating to God and the Savior, to doctrine and duty, principle and practice, precept and sanction, life and death, time and

eternity, be a cold, and a lax, and a negative system. While you are ever ready to give a reason for the peculiarities of your faith, be fond of regarding yourself as a Christian Minister, and your people as a Christian society, and aim that they shall be such in deed, as well as in name.

Far be it from me to join in the cant, which we sometimes hear about practical sermons; as if every sermon should relate to the inculcation of some moral duty. Many have been led by this narrow sentiment to waste much time and strength on mere exhortation. Doctrinal statements, and doctrinal discussions, are essential in their place. Preach all that Christ taught, as well as all that he commanded; and explain and enforce it, by all the illustrations you can derive from the world of matter and of mind.

I charge you to preach the truth with authority, as a message from God through his son Jesus Christ, and not merely as the sentiment of your own erring mind. At the same time, preach the truth as that of which you know the value by experience; as that which you have found to be most precious to your own soul; as that which is wrought into the very substance and texture of your mind and heart. Your inward convictions and experience will not be less likely to impart spirit and life to the truth, when you regard it as having the sanction of the immediate messenger of the living God.

In order that you may preach the truth of Christ with interest and freshness, be as conversant as possible with all truth derived from history, experience, or the instinctive intimations of the human soul. Remember that "all truth is from the sempiternal source of light Divine." Let it be seen that there is an admirable harmony between Revelation and Reason, between the works and the word of God; that with united radiance they illustrate his character, and the nature, duties, and destination of man.

Now in order that you may accomplish this great work, in any degree, it is evident that your life must be a life of labor, of study, of meditation. There has never been an age since the time of Christ, when intellectual as well as spiritual qualifications were more essential, in order that Christian ministers may maintain their hold upon the respect of the people, than at the present day. We live in an age when the press has, in some measure, come in competition with the pulpit; when the question, How shall they hear without a preacher, is not so significant as it once was. We live in a time when a vast amount of knowledge has been diffused among the people, and when they are eager to possess more. Sad, indeed, will be the case, if, from any cause, the Christian ministry remain stationary, or go backward, in respect to intellectual furniture, while the people are making progress. The minister's life then must be, in a great degree, a life of study. Let no facility of

composition, or of oral communication, tempt any of us to believe that the wants of the people can be permanently satisfied by unstudied effusions, gossiping stories, a parade of words, or an incessant repetition of even Scripture language, with whatever fearful tones or extravagant gestures they may be accompanied. Let no unreasonable expectations or wishes on the part of any of your people tempt you to consume that time in frequent speaking, which your conscience tells you ought to be bestowed on preparation for speaking. Even in the case of extraordinary talents, a minister must take in, as well as pour out, or his fountain will soon become dry.

I beg leave, also, to observe that the course of study of a Christian minister should have in view not merely the object of understanding our religion, explaining its records, unfolding its evidences, clearing up its obscurities, and enforcing its teachings by facts and analogies drawn from the world of matter and of mind, but for the purpose of being able to discuss, in a satisfactory manner, subjects not immediately connected with theology; for the purpose of taking a respectable part in societies for mutual improvement, for the promotion of education, and for the diffusion of knowledge among men. A power of this kind will much increase your influence on the intelligent part of the community. From what class of men are such things to be expected, if not from those who fill such an office, and occupy

such a position in society as Christian ministers. Such a course of study is also necessary to enlarge and liberalize the mind. For without an enlarged and liberal mind, even a very religious minister may be only the greatest mischief-maker in the place where he resides.

To pass to another topic, I charge you to maintain the independence of the pulpit. Be true to your own soul, to your convictions of duty, at all hazards. Be influenced by no consideration to keep back anything which is fairly included in the compass of Christian truth, and Christian duty, whether your people will hear, or whether they will forbear.

"Go to the plow or team, go hedge or ditch,
"Some *honest* calling use, no matter which,

rather than consent to be called a teacher of religion and morals with your mouth bridled, and the reins put into the hands not merely of one, but of a hundred hearers, every one of whom thinks he has a right to manage them, and to guide you as he pleases.

But while you are careful to maintain the independence of a minister of Christ, let it be seen by all, that it is far, very far removed from rashness, or passion, or party feeling. Remember, too, that true independence may be manifested as really by silence as by speech; and that you have not been called by God or man, to speak from the sacred desk upon every subject; not to be a politician, or a legislator, but a teacher of piety, religion, and morality. Recollect, too, that you have

the whole pulpit to yourself; that the customs of society do not authorize your hearers to answer you on any topic upon the spot, and that moderation, forbearance, and discretion on all controverted subjects become one who has all the speaking to himself.

Discretion—I charge you to remember, that it is an important Christian virtue, inculcated in the Sermon on the Mount, and constantly illustrated by the example of its preacher. Remember, then, that there are some duties of a Christian teacher, which depend not upon the mere instinct of moral feeling, but upon the circumstances in which he is placed. In the teaching and conduct of our Savior, we have a striking example of the good sense and soundness of mind, which are necessary in one who wishes to do good, in order that he may not defeat his own purposes by rashness, precipitation, or pushing any one idea to an extreme without regard to the circumstances by which duty may be affected. In Jesus you will observe a warmth of goodness which never consumes itself; a zeal not frustrated by indiscretion; a judgment in making known his character and publishing his doctrines, which was not affected by the forwardness of his friends, or the taunts of his enemies. I charge you to commune with the spirit of Christ as developed by the Evangelists, and you will understand what Christian discretion is, better than by any words which I can use. Some may regard this virtue of discretion as a dangerous virtue. But to one who

has an enlightened conscience, sanctified by the spirit of Christ crucified, it cannot be dangerous. A virtue, learned from Him who died for truth and humanity on Calvary, should not be feared or discarded by those who bear his name.

Allow me to close with urging upon you the special importance of making it a constant business to cultivate and cherish spiritual life in your own soul. We who are engaged in the ministry need at least as much care and watchfulness and prayer, in order to keep alive our own faith and piety and Christian love, as any other class of men. It is a remark of one of the few bishops who has earned the title of profound, well worthy of being printed on the heart of every preacher with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond, "that going over the theory of virtue in one's thoughts, talking well, and drawing fine pictures of it, this is so far from necessarily or certainly conducing to form a habit of it, that it may harden the mind in a contrary course, and render it gradually more insensible; i. e., form a habit of insensibility to all moral considerations." From this remark of bishop Butler, which has unhappily been confirmed by examples of monstrous iniquity in those who have been familiar with holy things, we learn our peculiar liability to fall into spiritual slumber and spiritual death.

But with the spirit of faith, of piety, and Christian love alive and active in your own soul, you will be

armed against the peculiar trials and discouragements attending the ministry at the present day. You will feel, like Jesus, that you are not alone, because the Father is with you. Your labors will be your delight, and not your drudgery. Your views of truth, of duty, of God, will be fresh and vivid; and God will bless your service. The good seed which you sow will sink deep; and though to human view it may appear for a time to be lost; and though you may sometimes have the feeling, the most painful that visits the minister's soul, that you have labored in vain and spent your strength for nought, yet by and by it will spring up and bear fruit in the reformation, the Christian graces, and the everlasting salvation of those who have been within the sphere of your influence. And though you may go forth weeping with your seed, you shall return rejoicing with your sheaves.

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP.

BY REV. J. F. BROWN, of West Cambridge.

In behalf of that branch of the Christian Church here represented, I extend to you, my brother, the Right Hand of Fellowship. You are identified, from your position, with a peculiar phase of denominational thought. And we who are associated in this days' service, must feel that there is a sort of speciality (so to speak) in the welcome now offered. Yet this branch of ours, being joined with others to the same parent trunk, which is Christ — there is the same current of sympathetic and affectional life that circulates through them all. May I not then appropriately say, that this expression of fellowship indicates your welcome to the sympathies — the encouragements — the hopes of the church universal? I welcome you not then to a *transient, visible* organism—but to that *internal, organic* relationship, that springs from the deep spiritual affinities of the heart, and is *imperishable*. Yea, with my whole soul, I welcome you to this free, developing, living church — whose life is progressive — whose ener-

gies are immortal. And, my brother, so far as your purpose is single, and your baptism spiritual and internal; so far, in the secret depths of your heart — this day, you must feel the strong and manly vibrations of this church's affectional, and sympathetic regard. In behalf of *such* a church, I welcome you to the ministrations of that truth that constitutes its life. I welcome you to the preaching of Christ's word — to the public dispensation of that truth, which sanctifies the heart of the world's faith, and reconstructs its interior life. I welcome you in the freshness of your energies — in the sincerity of your purpose, to this public analyzing, (as it were) of men's experiences — and the induction thereto, of this readjusting power, that comes from the christian life. And whatever may be your perplexities and doubts, springing from those exigencies, incident to this department of your ministerial service — however much your brain may be taxed and your heart wearied, forget not this sincere welcome to the confidential experiences — the warm encouragements, and the bright hopes of your co-workers in the faith.

Again, I welcome you to the more private duties of your professional life — to those beautiful experiences that connect you with the personal and more private relationships of your flock. Some heart, stricken with remorse, may come to you, with the simplicity of childhood — lay bare its secret springs, and plead for a more direct, and personal application of the reconciling

thought of Christ. Some heart may come to you with its tender, bereaved affections — for, my brother, the wail of sorrow will be no strange episode in your ministerial life — and these delicate sensibilities of a sorrowing heart — the affections in these painful exigencies you must meet. Yet I welcome you to these *sad*, though *blessed* experiences — to these experiences which, if rightly improved by you, will bind you with the strength of a never-dying love, to the immortal interests of your flock.

Again, I welcome you to all the enjoyments of your profession. Those that flow from a sweet consciousness of the true dignity of your mission. Those that are found in the good results of your labors, as seen through the clear-sightedness of a healthy Christian faith, — and, also, in those occasional expressions that come up in one's actual service — when you shall have paralyzed some evil will — when you shall have unsettled the boldest attitude of some worldly lust — or helped the infirmities of some drooping heart. Yea, I would not forget to welcome you to those enjoyments that flow from the tender, clinging affections of the *youth*, and the more enlarged sympathies, and the sanctified co-operating energies of the *elders* of your flock.

In conclusion: though all of these thoughts have been offered in the spirit of Christian friendship, I would express to you, now, my feelings of personal regard and welcome. I rejoice, my brother, that your

early hopes have been so cheerfully realized. I rejoice that, through your perseverance and industry — through the force of your personal will, made impregnable in your conscious submission to God, that you have been enabled to beat back those influences that would have drawn you from that profession which you have so wisely chosen. But I trust, my brother, that through these past struggles, painful though they may have been, your inner life has been rooted more firmly in God — you have been made stronger for your work, and have been more thoroughly consecrated to the great and absorbing idea of your life. We have often, at other times, and under different circumstances, affectionately joined *hands*, as our *hearts* seemed somewhat wedded to each other, through a similarity of experience. And as we again unite them, on an occasion like the present — an occasion fraught with so much interest to yourself; aye, and so much interest to the church, let them symbolize that inner, deeper union of heart with heart, that shall endure long after the symbol itself shall have crumbled to its native dust, and our spirits have gone home to the God that gave them.

Friend! Brother! welcome — welcome to this broad field of labor. Immortal spirits are here, all white for harvest; and when the Master shall call you in at the even-tide from your labors, come! Oh! brother, like a faithful reaper, come! Your sickle bright by the using, and bearing your immortal sheaves upon your bosom.

ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE.

BY REV. CONVERS FRANCIS, D. D., of Cambridge.

I address you, Christian friends, as the members of a *Religious Society*. You must be aware, that in the very act of constituting and sustaining such a society, there is a noble profession, which you are required to make good. Our parishes, scattered broad-cast over the land, are signals for God and for truth. The spires of our churches, as they rise with silent significance over the cities and villages of our fair New England, stand the symbols of a pledge for Christ and Christianity, which we are false to our trust if we do not redeem. On the ground of this spiritual obligation, I take my position, while I proceed to offer you a few words of candid and plain advice.

1. I would say, see to it that you are what may truly be called a *living* parish. You know what I mean by this,—a parish intent upon the great realities of the Christian institutions, *as* realities of the most vital and quickening kind. There are, unhappily, such men as

dead ministers in the pulpit ; and so there are such collections of people as dead congregations in our towns. If you say, that a torpid minister makes a torpid congregation, I admit at once the truth of the statement. But I must remind you, on the other hand, that a torpid congregation is very likely to make a torpid minister. Would to God there might be no occasion for mutual crimination on this point,—that each of the parties might always kindle and quicken the other. But my part of this service requires me to speak to you as a Christian Society. Let me, then, beseech you to be alive and earnest in this matter. It is here — I observe it with pain — that religious societies are prone to forget their danger. Too often they suffer their position to become a thing of drowsy routine and formality. The institution itself, indeed, they feel perhaps to be a venerable and time-hallowed one. But partly for this very reason,—because it *is* a matter of course, an establishment of past generations, time out of mind, which no well-ordered community would think of omitting,—it is apt to become rusty or slumberous. Guard against this supineness, if you would not be faithless to a sacred privilege. Do not permit the life of this hallowed relation to be smothered or stifled by an apathy, that will operate as a slow but sure poison. Members of Christian congregations, so called, are but too much disposed to think, that when they pay their taxes, or contribute their money cheerfully, when they are kind

to the minister, and go to church regularly, even if it be to sleep there, or to muse over the projects and gains of the week, they are not only blameless, but somewhat remarkably good parishioners. I must counsel you to aim higher, very much higher, than this. I would have you make your religious association as living a thing as the truth of God itself is living. Let it be filled with all the vital earnestness which springs from the heartfelt thought of eternity and salvation. Maintain it in this character week by week, month by month, year by year. Remembering that Christianity, in its essence, is nothing less than a deep inward life of the soul, let the community which gathers into this house be a seed-plot for heaven, full of spiritual growth, beautiful and fresh as the garden of the Lord.

2. Let me advise you to cherish a spirit of brotherly *union*. A parish is a Christian family. Regard it, as you ought, in that light, and you will see that parish quarrels are as bad and deplorable as family quarrels. The household of faith, like the domestic household, should be a sacred thing. You must shun discord around the altar and the church as carefully as you would around the fireside of home. Among those who habitually "go up to the house of God in company," there should be peculiarly a spirit of mutual kindness and mutual concession,—an accommodating temper,—and that sincere desire to promote the common good by harmonious action, which is no less a Christian grace

than a neighborly virtue. I think I have known parishes as much injured by the stiff prejudices of their members, by sour animosities about trifles, and by unaccommodating crotchets, as by any other cause whatever. Certainly I would advise no one to carry his desire of pleasing his fellow-worshippers so far, as to jeopard or to weaken the great interests of truth and righteousness. God forbids him to do that; and Christian prudence, guiding the firmness of unbending principle, will generally secure both fidelity and peace. But let me counsel every one to postpone, or to sacrifice, if need be, his own merely partialities or wishes, for the sake of the general good. More than half of the contentions, which disturb our Christian communities, spring from nothing better than whims or wilfulness. Now, I say, do not allow these to get footing among you; for if you do, your association will inevitably be enfeebled and vitiated. Remember that if you come together for Christian purposes, you must come together on the platform of Christian love and forbearance. Let no excitements among yourselves, or from without,—no needless conflicts of judgment or feeling about your parish affairs,—no suspicions or dislikes about other ministers and churches, which, if cherished by the whisperings of scandal, may soon blister into calumnies, and all manner of uncharitableness,—let none of these things mar your strength or peace. Seek with all your hearts, the blessing that crowns the

fellowship of brethren who dwell together in unity.

3. I must counsel you to make much of the stated religious services of this house. This is often spoken of as a duty which people owe to their *clergymen*. I would rather speak of it as a duty which you owe to *yourselves*,—to your own spiritual welfare. One of the main benefits of the Sunday institution is, that it secures the interests of social religion from the vagrant uncertainty in which they might otherwise be left, gives them a fast lodgment among the other great interests of the social state, and moors them, so to say, steadfastly among the cherished feelings and habits of the community. I exhort you to do nothing, and to encourage nothing, that would loosen these fixtures of holy worship and of Christian instruction. It has become the more necessary to press this point upon your attention, because at the present day, many persons among us deem it a mark of wisdom and of superiority to vulgar prejudice, to disparage the Sabbath and its customary observances, as if these things were no better than old wives' fables. Now all this seems to me a very shallow, false, and random way of talking. If, as is often alleged, the life has gone out of our religious institutions, then put life into them,—the more, the better. They may need to be shaken from slumber or formality,—to be made more active and true; but, surely, that is no reason for putting them to death. There is a great deal of idle declamation afloat among

us, about the uselessness of *going to meeting*. This is no new folly, though newly vamped. The less heed you give to it, the better for yourselves. Love your church and its services; and believe not those who tell you, that these things have become idle tales. You may, indeed, make them idle tales by your negligence or your worldliness; but if you love them with a religious love, if you maintain the spiritual interest which will demand the energy of a truthful soul in this pulpit, then shall you find here the word which God speaks to his children, and you shall know it to be the Word of Life.

4. A few words touching your relation to him, whom you this day welcome to his hallowed office. In this connexion I might also speak of the relation you sustain to your beloved Senior Pastor. But he has been so long known to you, and to us all, for the ability, devotedness, and fidelity, with which he has accomplished a good work in the ministry, that I am persuaded not a word is necessary to remind you of what you owe to him. I know that spontaneous blessings from a multitude of hearts rest on him; and we have only to add our prayers to yours, that we may long be permitted to rejoice in his usefulness, and to catch from his example the spirit of our common Master.

In your Junior Pastor you have one, who, we doubt not, will bring to your service a strong and enlightened mind, a devoted heart, a Christ-like spirit, and who will

consecrate these to his ministry among you, with a single aim to your good. In speaking of your connexion with him, nearly all my counsel might be expressed at once, by saying, if you would kindle his energies, animate his heart, and stimulate him to work always better and more devotedly, let him see that his labors are not in vain, that he is not wasting himself on an unrequited task. Remember that religion cannot be brought from abroad and laid *upon* your faculties and affections, yourselves meanwhile being idle and passive. It must have its growth from within; its roots must be, not on the surface, but in the depths of your spiritual nature, or it will bear no fruit unto eternal life. The eloquence of inspiration cannot *make* you Christians. That must be done by the action of your own souls in union with the action of God's Spirit. I fear that the old Popish notion of a *vicarious* religion — the work of the priest in the people's stead,—still lingers somewhat among us in disguised forms. Let no practical error of this kind insidiously get possession of your minds; but remember that you cannot be Christians by proxy, even if that proxy be the most pious and most efficient minister.

Your great duty, then, with respect to your pastor, is to *co-operate* with him. He cannot be your helper, unless you are willing to be helped. I say, therefore, co-operate with your minister. Co-operate with him

by bringing to this place, not a careless, lounging state of mind, that hopes to be amused by eloquent ingenuity, or to be stirred by something new and startling, but feelings alive with the simple, earnest desire to know the truth as it is in Jesús, and to welcome its renewing power,—feelings ready and waiting to meet and appropriate the Prayer, the Sermon, and the Divine Word : in short, bring hither a *prepared* mind ; for it is the want of a prepared, humble, serious mind, in going to church, which is the cause of more than half of the complaints about preachers and about Sunday. Co-operate with him by giving your ready help and hearty concurrence in his attempts to do good, his efforts to promote social and religious improvement ; for, you may depend upon it, you can in no way more surely strike discouragement into his heart, than by making him feel that it is his hard fate to work alone, that whatever wise and Christian plans of usefulness he may propose, call forth from you little or no aid and sympathy. Co-operate with him by preserving whole and entire his freedom of opinion and speech on all the subjects, private and public, to which his sense of duty as a preacher of Gospel truth, may require him to apply the principles of Christian morality ; for, surely, you know that the minister who will consent to wear fetters in his soul, or a gag in his mouth, is not the man for the high purposes of the pulpit ; and, I am persuaded, you would be ashamed

to say or think — as is sometimes said or thought — that the holy interests of freedom, of human brotherhood, and of moral reform, are to be shut out from the reach of Gospel ethics. Co-operate with him by a fair and kind judgment of his words and actions, that no ungenerous misinterpretation, no wanton fault-finding may throw obstacles in the way of his ministry, or sadden his heart with a sense of injustice; for you must be aware, that the work of a young minister is, at the best, an arduous one, and should never be made more so by any want of candor or charity on your part. Co-operate with him by making no burdensome demands upon him for unimportant things, that he may have a large proportion of his hours for the silence of the study, and for the preparation of that “beaten oil” you would have to feed the light which is to shine from this pulpit. He, I am sure, will never neglect or undervalue those pastoral duties which are the joy and the delight of a good minister; if he should do so, certainly he will make a great and fatal mistake; on your part, then, be careful not to make such unreasonable claims upon his attention, as will leave but a scanty portion of uninterrupted time for the greatest of his duties. In short, I would say, remember that while he is to minister to you by giving his heart, soul, and strength to your service, there are many ways in which you, too, are to minister to him by sustaining that character, which is one of the most

honorable amidst the relations of society,— the character of good parishioners.

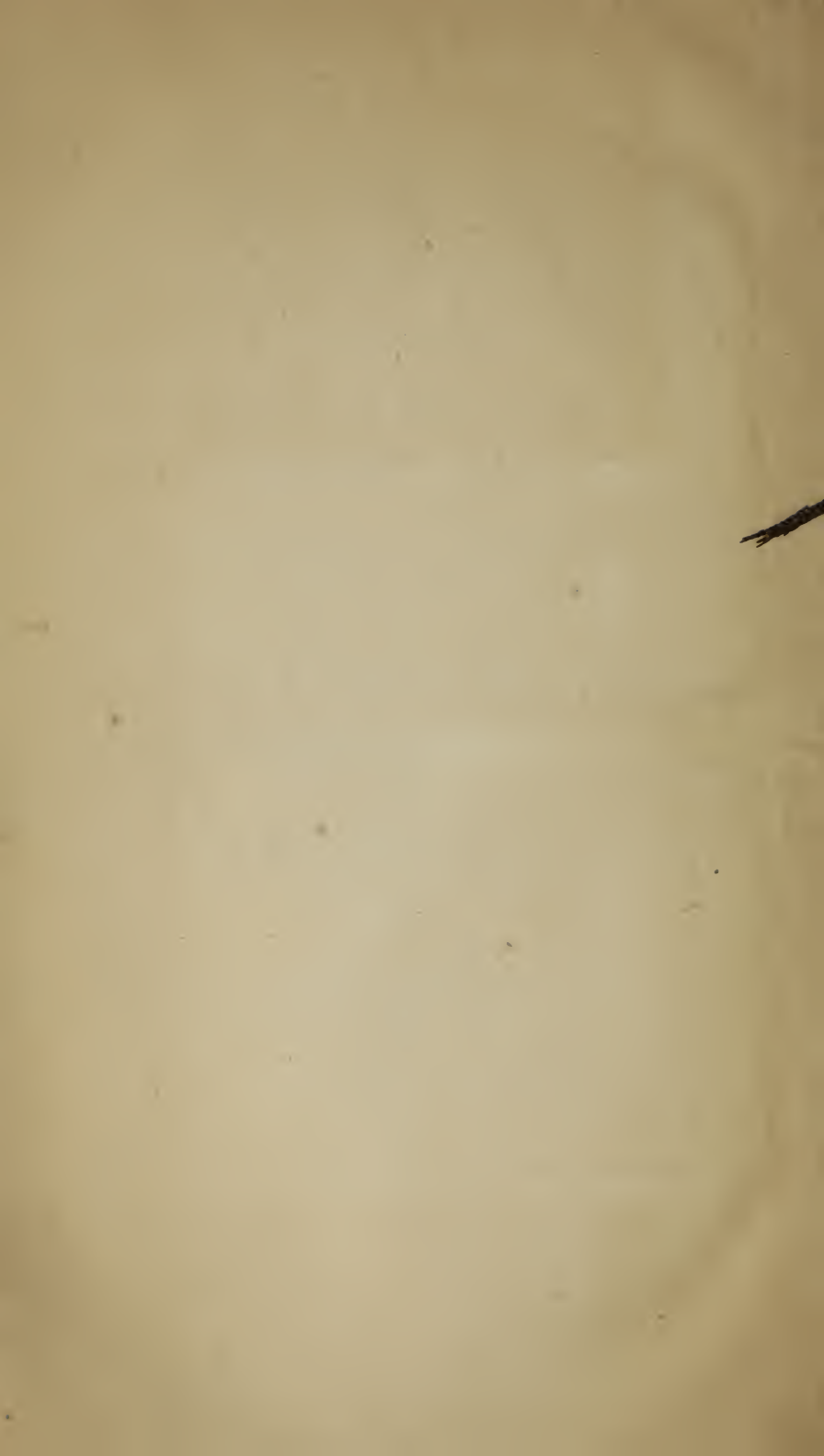
5. Let me add a word or two respecting your relation to the cause of Christian truth in general, and to other Christian societies. While you watch with faithful and affectionate care over your own religious interests, cast an eye beyond these, to the religious interests of your brethren in the household of a pure faith. Through the length and breadth of our land there rises up a cry for the power of rational, earnest, vital Christianity,— a Christianity that will neither enslave the intellect nor crush the heart,— that will make every waste place green, and bless every soul it touches,— that will speed, as with an energy from heaven, the cause of freedom, of progress, and of holiness. To this cry, if you have the prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom at heart, you cannot be deaf or insensible. Every Christian society is, or ought to be, a constituent portion of the great Church of Humanity and Righteousness, not only within itself, but wherever its agency can reach. Each separate body of the worshippers of God, should regard itself as a fortress for the defence and support of the best hopes of the community at large,— those hopes, which are linked by indissoluble ties to the purity of Christian principles, and to the might of the Christian spirit. I beg you to regard this as no light or unimportant trust.

In your position with respect to other religious societies, whose faith may differ in few or many points from your own, never arrogate to yourselves the exclusive possession of light, wisdom, or liberality. These are qualities rather of individuals than of sects, and are found scattered more or less among the thousand varieties of creeds, into which Christendom is parcelled. Make no boastful parade of your freedom from bigotry; for professed liberality may have, and has, its bigots; but let the whole spirit of your conduct and feelings towards other Christians testify for you, that in the school of Christ you have learned to spurn the fetters of narrowness, and to prize above all other tokens of discipleship, that which the Great Master himself prized most highly. Let it be manifest that, however much you value your peculiar belief, there are things which you value more. Take hearty pleasure in acknowledging true moral worth and the Christlike character, whether you find them in your own or another compartment of the religious world. Let not the boundary lines between yourselves and your fellow Christians around you, whatever else they may be, become the boundary lines of good will, of respect, or of kindness. I trust that neither you nor they will ever forget that you all look for pardon and mercy to one common Father, and are bound by the ties of the heart's faith to Him who hath said, "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples,

if ye have love one to another." Never allow your relation to others to be embittered by poor and paltry jealousies. Seek, rather, to twine it with those virtues and graces, which are the badge of what is better than right and sound opinions — a right and sound heart.

But I must bring my words of advice to a close. In brief, then, remember that your position as a Christian Society, is one of living moral power in all its forms. Do not look upon your association as an establishment, which is to work its machinery, and go through its round of offices, without taking hold of the doings of men, and never presenting those doings at the bar of judgment fixed by God's law. It is not enough, that its wheels revolve smoothly and regularly; they must move the interests of God's kingdom on earth, and hold sin in check. Your parish, and every parish, is bound to keep alive, in the midst of the world around it, a quickening element of truth, humanity, and righteousness. Only thus can each of these communities become a household of God. Let me add, as I do with the sincerest pleasure, that your sister churches here represented, greet you on this happy occasion with Christian salutations, and with the most hearty wishes for your spiritual prosperity. And now, Friends and Brethren, "we commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them who are

sanctified ;” and may He, without whose blessing we and our works are nothing worth, ever visit you, as individuals and as a society, with the presence of his enlightening and renewing Spirit.



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